

Message Text

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SUBJ: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT TOLBERT ON ANGOLA

1. PRESIDENT TOLBERT CALLED ME TO THE EXECUTIVE MANSION ON OCTOBER 22 TO PASS ON RESULTS OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH DR. SAVIMBI, HEAD OF UNITA, AND UNITA DEPUTY FONMINISTER KABUMBA, WHOSE VISIT PRECEDED THAT OF DR. SAVIMBI. THE MEETING LASTED ONE HOUR WITH FONMINISTER DENNIS ALSO PRESENT.

2. TOLBERT SAID THAT IN OUTLINING THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA, SAVIMBI NOTED THAT SINCE COLLAPSE OF THE NAKURU AGREEMENT OF JULY 1975, THE THREE RIVAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN IN OPEN ARMED CONFLICT. SAVIMBI SAID THAT IN AUGUST THE MPLA HAD SHOT DOWN A UNITA AIRCRAFT IN WHICH HE WAS PRESUMED TO BE FLYING. THIS INCIDENT, IN ADDITION TO OTHER ARMED ATTACKS ON HIS FOLLOWERS, LED HIM TO WARN MPLA THAT UNITA WOULD NOT LONGER WITHOLD ITS FIRE IF ATTACKED. SAVIMBI NOTED HE WAS THE SOLE LEADER OF THE THREE WHO HAD REMAINED IN ANGOLA THROUGHOUT THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND THAT HIS CONCERN WAS SOLELY FOR ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE AND NOT FOR PERSONAL POWER. SAVIMBI LAID FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CURRENT HOSTILITIES ON THE MPLA, WHICH HAD RECEIVED LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS FROM THE USSR AND THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. SAVIMBI SAID THAT A SOVIET SHIP THREE DAYS AGO HAD UNLOADED TANKS, ARMORED CARS AD EVEN MISSILE IN ANGOLA. THE UNITA AND FNLA ARE AT A DISTINCT DISADVANTAGE COMPARED TO MPLA IN TERMS OF NUMBERS AND SOPHISTICATION OF WEAPONS.

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3. ONHTHE POLITICAL FRONT, SAVIMBI IS CONVINCED THAT NETO WILL

MAKE AN UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WILL RECOGNIZE HIS REGIME IMMEDIATELY AND WILL PRESSURE THE LEFT-LEANING AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO FOLLOW SUIT. SAVIMBI MET WITH THE OAU COMMISSION OF INQUIRY BUT IS NOT SANGUINE OVER THE OAU ROLE SINCE HE BELIEVES THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION IS NEITHER OBJECTIVE NOR IMPARTIAL. ACCORDING TO SAVIMBI, THE OAU CHAIRMAN ATTRIBUTES GREATER POWER AND INFLUENCE TO THE MPLA THAN IS ACTUALLY THE CASE. UNITA AND FNLA ACTUALLY CONTROL MORE TERRITORY AND MORE PUPULATION. SAVIMBI SAID HE WOULD ACCEPT THE RESULTS OF A FREE ELECTION BUT COULD NOT ACCEPT THE IMPOSITION OF AN MPLA REGIME BY FORCE. PRESIDENT TOLBERT TOLD SAVIMBI THAT THE PRIME CONSIDERATION IS TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNITY AND CONSOLIDATE INDEPENDENCE. TOLBERT CONTINUED THAT HE EXPECTED THE OAU COMMISSION TO FILE ITS REPORT WITHIN A MATTER OF DAYS. HE WOULD THEN STUDY THE REPORT CAREFULLY AND DECIDE ON GOL'S COURSE OF ACTION. TOLBERT INQUIRED OF SAVIMBI AS TO THE PORTUGUESE ROLE IN THE FIGHTING. SAVIMBI REPLIED THAT BEFORE THE LEFTIST GOVERNMENT IN LISBON WAS CHANGED THREE WEEKS AGO, THE PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES IN ANGOLA HAD PROVIDED ARMS AND EXPERTS TO THE MPLA. THESE ARMS CANNOT NOW BE WITHDRAWN. IN RESPONSE TO TOLBERT'S QUESTION AS TO WHAT LIBERIA COULD DO TO HELP, SAVIMBI SAID THAT IN THE EVENT OF A UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE BY THE MPLA, LIBERIA SHOULD NOT RECOGNIZE THE MPLA REGIME AND THAT TOLBERT USE HIS GOOD OFFICES TO PERSUADE OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES NOT TO RECOGNIZE. SAVIMBI ALSO URGED TOLBERT IN STRONGEST TERMS TO USE HIS GOOD OFFICES TO APPEAL TO THE US, UK, FRANCE AND OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO PROVIDE MORE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO UNITA. SAVIMBI SAID THE MPLA HAD ESCALATED THE CONFLICT TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT SUPPLIES ARE NOW BEING BROUGHT IN BY AIR. SAVIMBI SAID US AID WAS TOO SLOW AND THAT HE HOPED THAT SOME OTHER CHANNELS COULD BE WORKED OUT FOR FUNNELING US AID OTHER THAN THE SOLE ZAIRE CHANNEL. SAVIMBI SAID THE SOVIETS WERE BASING SOME OF THEIR SUPPLY OPERATIONS, PARTICULARLY AIR OPERATIONS, OUT OF CONG-BRAZZAVILLE AND UGANDA. SAVMIMBI SAID HE HAD MADE CONTACT WITH SOUTH AFRICA FOR HELP SINCE HE FELT THEY COULD COOPERATE IN A COMMON EFFORT AGAINST THE COMMON ENEMY OF COMMUNISM EVEN THOUGH UNITA DEPLORED APARTHEID.

4. TOLBERT THEN EXPRESSED AT SOME LENGTH HIS DEEP CONCEN OVER THE
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ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM IN AFRICA. HE INQUIRED AS TO US POLICY IN THIS REGARD. I RESPONDED THAT IT HAS BEEN THE GENERAL US POLICY IN THIS REGARD. I RESPONDED THAT IT HAS BEEN THE GENERAL US POLICY TO KEEP AFRICA FREE OF BIG POWER RIVALRIES AND TO ASSIST OUR FRIENDS TO MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE IN RAISING STANDARDS OF LIVING AND HELPING TO CREATE CONDITIONS UNFAVORABLE TO COMMINISM. TOLBERT EXPRESSED HIS FEAR THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITIONS IN EAST AFRICA AND THEN DEVOTE GREATER AND MORE

URGENT ATTENTION TO WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES. HE THOUGHT THAT WESTERN DEMOCRACIES WERE AT A DISADVANTAGE IN DEALING WITH PROBLEMS LIKE ANGOLA, WHERE THE SOVIETS COULD MOVE RAPIDLY AND DECISIVELY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION, WHILE THE DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES HAD TO MOVE IN PACE WITH PUBLIC OPINION. TOLBERT ALSO EXPRESSED THE FEAR THAT IN THE EVENT OF A UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE BY MPLA THE FLNA AND UNITA WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE LABELED AS REBELS AND PROGRESSIVELY ELIMINATED BY MPLA WITH SOVIET BLOC ASSISTANCE. ALSO, SHOULD ANGOLA BE TAKEN OVER BY MPLA, PACIFIC SOLUTIONS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES WOULD BE RENDERED MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. HE THOUGHT THAT MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES WERE NOW COVERING THEIR BETS WITH THE LEFT-LEANING REGIMES AND WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THAT MUCH MORE ATTENTION MUST BE GIVEN TO COMMUNIST SUBVERSION ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. HE SAID HE DID NOT EXCLUDE LIBERIA AS A TARGET. IT WAS CONCEIVABLE THAT IF HE AND HIS SUCCESSORS DID NOT IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE, COMMUNISM WOULD POSE AN ALTERNATIVE.

5. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUESTION I TOLD PRESIDENT TOLBERT THAT I FRANKLY HAD NO KNOWLEDGE WHATSOEVER OF WHAT AID OR ASSISTANCE WAS BEING PROVIDED BY THE US TO FNLA OR UNITA. THIS WAS PERFECTLY NORMAL SITUATION FOR SECURITY REASONS, SINCE I HAD NO NEED TO KNOW. I OBSERVED ON A PURELY PERSONAL BASIS THAT USG WOULD CERTAINLY WISH TO KEEP A LOW PUBLIC PROFILE IN REGARD TO ANY ASSISTANCE BEING RENDERED TO FNLA OR UNITA IN LIGHT OF US CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION REGARDING US INVOLVEMENT IN FOREIGN CONFLICTS, PARTICULARLY WHERE THERE WAS ACTIVE FIGHTING. I ASSURED PRESIDENT TOLBERT THAT I WOULD ATTEMPT TO CONVEY THE FULL FLAVOR AND IMMEDIACY OF HIS CONCERNS OVER THE ANGOLAN SITUATION AND RELAY DR. SAVIMBI'S APPEAL FOR INCREASED AND MORE TIMELY US AID. I WOULD ALSO CONVEY HIS MORE LONG-RANGE CONCERNS OVER THE INROADS OF COMMUNISM ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT.

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6. COMMENT: I WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE IN RESPONDING TO TOLBERT'S CONCERNS. HE OBVIOUSLY EXPECTS SOME REACTION FROM US. AT NO TIME DID HE INDICATE THAT HE WISHED TO SERVE AS A MEDIATOR OR INTERMEDIARY OR TO OTHERWISE GET ASTRIDE OF US LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS RE ANGOLAN PROBLEM. RATHER, HE WISHED TO SHARE HIS CONCERNS WITH USG AND TO INITIATE A DIALOGUE ON ANGOLA AND THE COMMUNISM PROBLEM IN GENERAL.
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